

(c) the action Government propose to take to protect the interest of SC/ST employees in his Ministry?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERVANI):

(a) No Sir, an SC/ST Cell is operating in the Ministry.

(b) Question does not arise. The interests of employees belonging to the SC/ST are protected as per the extant rules and guidelines on the subject.

(c) All measures are taken to protect and safeguard the interests of employees belonging to the SC/ST categories through various channels including the Liaison Officer and the Staff Grievance Officer. The employees belonging to SC/ST categories have free access to raise their grievances at the highest level in the Ministry and it is ensured that suitable action is taken to redress their grievances.

#### US Assistance to Pakistan

2320. SHRI RAGHUNANDAN LAL BHATIA : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state :

(a) whether United States has decided to amend the US Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to relax the existing restrictions on US military and economic assistance to Pakistan;

(b) if so, its impact on India's security; and

(c) the reaction of Indian Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALEEM IQBAL SHERVANI):

(a) The US Senate has passed an amendment to the US Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 lifting some restrictions on US military and economic assistance to Pakistan which had been in place on account of Pakistan's externally assisted nuclear weapons programme. The amendment, if enacted into law after due process, would allow programmes relating to military training of Pakistani defence service officers and the extension of overseas Private Investment Credit (OPIC) and EXIM Bank guarantees to US corporations engaged in projects in Pakistan.

(b) and (c) Government have expressed concern at this development as an encouragement to Pakistan's nuclear and missile programmes. The amendment has been passed in the wake of reports of Pakistan having tested a medium-range missile and establishing a missile facility with Chinese assistance. These developments have serious implications for India's security. Government have noted that these same provisions were contained in the 1995 Brown Amendment but had not been implemented

at that time because of supply of ring magnets by China to Pakistan's nuclear enrichment facility. Government have conveyed India's concern at these developments to the US authorities. Government remain committed to take appropriate steps to safeguard India's security.

#### Cooperation in Nuclear Technology

2321. SHRI PRITHVIRAJ D. CHAVAN : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission has signed a nuclear technology cooperation agreement with the Governments of Malaysia and Philippines recently;

(b) if so, whether the agreement has any security implications for India; and

(c) if so, the steps taken/proposed to be taken by the Government to remedy the situation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI KAMLA SINHA) : (a) Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission signed a Memorandum of Understanding on 8th March, 1997 with the Philippine Nuclear Research Institute on cooperation in the field of peaceful uses of atomic energy. As per available information, there is no agreement between Pakistan and Malaysia on cooperation in nuclear technology.

(b) and (c) Government are carefully and continuously assessing all issues relating to Pakistan's nuclear programme and its implications for the national security. Government are committed to taking all necessary steps to safeguard national interest and security, in accordance with our own threat perceptions.

[Translation]

#### Assistance for Development of Hill Areas

2322. SHRI BUDHSEN PATEL : Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Central assistance is made available to some States for the development of hilly areas and if so the Criteria adopted for the same;

(b) whether the Technical Committee of the working group constituted by the Planning Commission during Seventh Plan had identified some areas of Madhya Pradesh as hilly areas;

(c) if so, whether the Union Government have made provision for additional Central assistance for the development of hilly areas of Madhya Pradesh during the Ninth Plan; and